

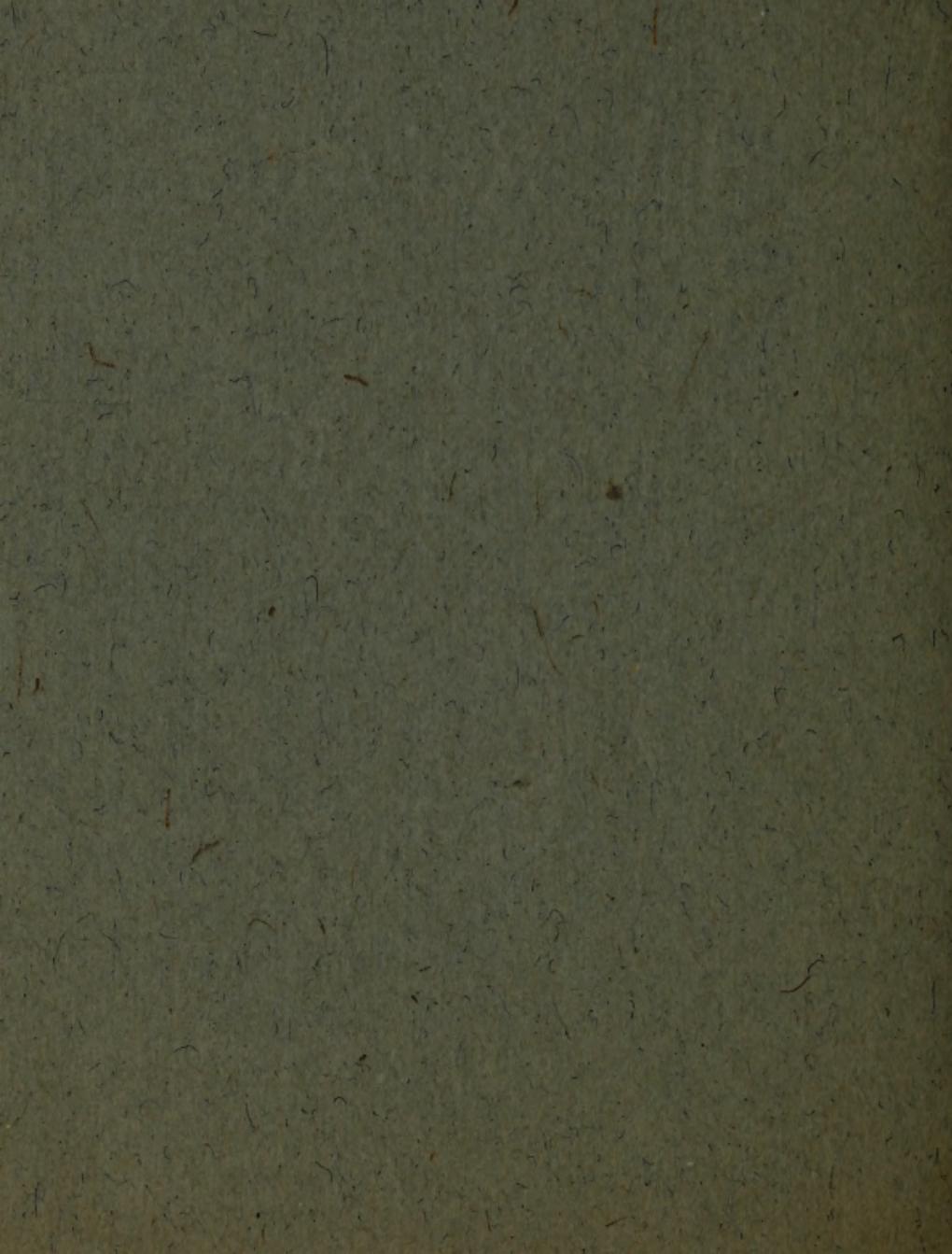
Social Reform :

What ?
and by Whom ?



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Social Reform: What? and by Whom?

“THE Kingdom of God is at hand.” The old words have a new meaning in view of present social ideals and corresponding endeavours. Yet, while sympathetic onlookers are many, practical endeavourers are comparatively few. The urgent need is that the common man and woman, who has enough faith and humanity to care to do good, should no longer be content to help an individual here

and there, but should lend a hand intelligently and habitually in the general uplift of society. There must be thousands who would do this if they knew how. We propose, therefore, to put before some of them a brief statement of the reforms which seem most important, and to suggest ways and means by which these may be effectually promoted.

I. Decent homes must be made attainable by all our working people. Slum life, and even the crowding of unwholesome country cottages, makes health impossible and vice almost inevitable. Much is done by municipalities, especially London, Liverpool, and Glasgow, and by private companies and individuals, to meet this need; but the bulk of the poor will be sacrificed until the operations of the private builder are controlled by Government, as the expression of public common sense, and the number of

persons living on a given area is limited by inflexible authority, in accordance with the laws of health.

II. Men's wages are often unjustly low, and insufficient for the maintenance of reasonable comfort. The best cure for this evil seems to be offered by the systems of co-operation and profit-sharing, while public opinion should encourage all workers to act together in orderly unions.

III. One in every four persons in the capital of the British Empire dies in a workhouse, asylum, or hospital, while to working men and women, generally, old age is a dismal prospect, and its experience to many a misery. Universal and compulsory insurance during the years of youth, when wages are largest, responsibility least, and disciplinary thrift most

important for character, would, with or without Government aid, procure old age pensions and dispel the fear of want.

IV. Thousands of women are pressed towards a life of vice by the remuneration (often less than a penny an hour), which barely keeps body and soul together. The recent exposition of "sweated industries," brought to the notice of West London and of the world by the proprietors of the "Daily News," presented a salutary warning against cruel cheapness. It might well be followed by such information as the "White List" of New York, which shows where goods may be purchased without the risk of "oppressing the hireling in his wages." But everyone can do something in this way for himself, especially by dealing with co-operative societies.

V. Children's interests claim manifold reform. Such oversight as is extended to illegitimate children in Leipsic would save a multitude of the babes who are done to death by criminal carelessness or curable ignorance within a year of birth—a mortality amounting in some towns to 250 per 1,000. How controllable this destruction is has been lately shown by the Mayor of Huddersfield, by means of prizes for parental care. In some cities the municipal provision of sterilized milk has reduced this mortality by one-half.

VI. Child labour, though mostly free from the hideous tyranny of factories and mines which disgraced British industry sixty years ago, and which is largely reproduced to-day in the factories of South Carolina and New Jersey and the mines of Pennsylvania, is often maintained in forms and measures incompatible with

moral and physical well-being. How careless of this vital interest nominal Christians may be appears in the fact that in two States of the American Union (Delaware and Georgia) there is still no legal limit to the employment of children, many of whom are kept at work all night.

VII. Naughty children, who would be the hooligans of the near future, are promptly transformed into orderly, enthusiastic, self-governed citizens, in such juvenile communities as the George Junior Republic of New York State, while Mr. Wilson L. Gill's similar method of "the School City" succeeds wherever it is applied—alike in Boston and Havana—in instilling a new sense of responsibility and honour, and fashioning Christian character. The Government of Ontario has a department for the protection or reclamation of destitute

or criminal children, the able and trusted head of which has emptied and closed the Reformatory of Toronto, and proved that homes (though only by adoption) and natural duties are the effective remedial agency for the worst of juvenile offenders.

VIII. Separate Children's Courts, with private trials and probation officers, are preventing—alike in many parts of America and in Ireland—the development of criminals; while the curfew law, keeping children off the streets at night, unless accompanied by a responsible person, is operating in 1,000 American cities and villages to cut off the worst temptations of early life and sometimes as much as seventy-five per cent. of local crime.

IX. The labour market and the public must be relieved of the burden of the unemploy-

able, by means of home colonies under competent agricultural and industrial teachers, and with legal powers of detention. These would lift weakness to independence in many cases, and convert moral refuse to any possible good account.

X. Drink continues its work of destruction, slaying annually its thousands, blighting innocent lives and wasting the resources of the nation. The control of this supreme evil by "local option" is, perhaps, within sight; but deliverance will not be effected until reformers care enough to provide a necessary substitute for the house of strong drink. The poor man must have a social meeting-place (with or) without the temptation of alcohol.

XI. Poverty, the great inclusive problem, constantly compels attention. It involves

directly more than a quarter of the population alike in the metropolis and in the country town. The most recent investigation shows that the bulk of it is caused by misfortune and not by fault, and, where fault is most obvious, the innocent sufferers may outnumber the faulty. In England there is as yet no consistent and effective treatment of poverty. Germany has shown the way by the Elberfeld system, which in Berlin engages the service of 4,000 unpaid workers, but professional and impulsive distributors of charity bar the way of reform among us, and will continue to do so until the public insist upon unity of authority and administration, with the neighbourly and methodical interest of those who *have* in those who *have not*.

XII. Everyone must live by the land.
"Even the King is served by the field." A

monopoly of land must therefore affect public interests even more seriously than a monopoly of bread. The withholding of land from productive use, without compensatory taxation, is national impoverishment, which must press hardest upon the weakest class. How would an enlightened public opinion require a truly representative Government to deal with the present land tenure of England?

Here are twelve problems, among many others, which lie, in the light of modern science, waiting for practical solution. How, and by whom, are these problems to be solved, these needs to be met? "No question is settled until it is settled right," and, therefore, settled in the interest of the whole people and not of a class. The necessary rightness cannot be provided by party politicians, or by the best of

Governments, which is only the executive of the dominant Party of the time. It is the expression of the Divine righteousness in the nation, the sum of its Christian wisdom, grappling with the evils of tyranny, corruption, and ignorance.

To say that the Church should take an interest in such work would be a feeble truism. The whole of it belongs to the Church, as her proper and special business. Every part of it illustrates the manifold salvation which she has to make known. Every privilege gained by injustice and held by force is a stumbling-block to be removed, through the formation and operation of sound public opinion, by those who would "prepare the way of the Lord." There is no work more spiritual than that of justice and mercy, and a general endeavour of the Church to do this would, more than all other possible efforts, recover for her the respect and

confidence of the world, while all success along this line would enlarge the opportunities of evangelism, and liberate souls for the acceptance of grace. We submit to our readers the question: Should not every Church put itself on record annually, as well as on special occasions, upon every public question involving moral injuries or interests?

Christian Endeavour Societies might greatly increase their usefulness by definite attention to social questions. A Social Service Committee, whose duty it would be to gather information, to report the resolutions and movements of the Church with regard to social and industrial betterment, and to suggest corresponding ministries to the members, would invigorate the Society more than any expressions or habits of piety, which are apt to become mechanical and monotonous.

But no Church or society can relieve the individual of the duty of personal service. Where there is any capacity (and who will care to say he has none?) there is a corresponding obligation to "serve his own generation, according to the will of God." The will of God is made known by the manifestation of needs and the opening of opportunities. Knowledge is now offered to all, and he who knows can speak and pass on to others what he has read or heard, so moulding, in some measure, the public opinion which will express itself, sooner or later, in law and custom. The man of one talent is required to use and to increase it, and it is he who is most tempted to bury it, as too small to be worthy of practical consideration.

Those who seek definite guidance in any department may find it at "The British Institute of Social Service," 11 Southampton Row,

London, W.C. The quarterly magazine of the Institute, entitled "Progress," or the smaller monthly magazine of the "Christian Union for Social Service" (Lingfield, Surrey), are constantly reporting the freshest thought and the latest experiences of betterment, while the "Daily News" and other earnestly-edited papers, present illustrations of the great movement from day to day.

No Christian will fail to recognize that prayer, or direct intercourse with God, is essentially necessary in this battle with evil; but prayer is no substitute for testimony. The quaint American evangelist, Sam Jones, remonstrating with professors who confined their efforts to prayer, said: "These things are settled by voting and God does not vote." In other words, God will not do man's work. Let us bring courage and strength to our own hearts and

all the mysterious co-operation of the Divine Spirit by prayer, while fulfilling the condition of such experience by all that is possible to ourselves in word and deed.

Hundreds are perishing every day from preventable causes, while thousands are living in needless degradation and misery. The responsibility for this moral and physical ruin rests largely upon the Christian Church, which has not cared enough to remove the stumbling-blocks out of the way of the poor, the ignorant, and the helpless. Which of us, in view of this general failure, can say with St. Paul: "I call God to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men"?



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NOTE.

For information on the Movement and
Method of Social Service, see

“PROGRESS,”

the Quarterly Organ of the **“BRITISH
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SERVICE,”**
11 Southampton Row, London, W.C., and

“SOCIAL SERVICE,”

the Monthly Organ of the C.S.S.U. Train-
ing Colony, Lingfield, Surrey.

OBJECTS OF THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SERVICE,

11 Southampton Row, London, W.C.



TO collect, register, and disseminate information relating to all forms of Social Service and Industrial Betterment adaptable to the needs of the United Kingdom, in order:—

- (1) To make such information available to all concerned in the improvement and elevation of our national life;
- (2) To promote the initiation and development in this country of the most beneficial and successful forms of Social Service;
- (3) To give assistance to all organisations that have social aims, and to facilitate co-operation between them ; and, as far as possible, to prevent overlapping.